

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested. Claims 14 and 15 have been cancelled. The dependency of claim 5 has been corrected as requested. Hence the rejection of this claim under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, is now moot.

Claims 1, 16, 19 and 23 have been amended to clarify the substantially cylindrically symmetric conical nature of the magnetic pole pieces. Support for these amendments may be found in the specification as originally filed, for example at paragraph 55. No new matter is added by these amendments.

Claims 1, 16, 19 and 23, and their respective dependent claims, are patentable over Hamaguchi et al., US 6,787,780. Hamaguchi describes a multibeam e-beam apparatus that includes a number of similarly configured electron beam columns for inspecting a wafer. Although this apparatus seems to employ only a single gun coil 200 with individual column pole pieces 210, these pole pieces are not conical as presently claimed. Accordingly, the claims are not anticipated by Hamaguchi.

Claims 3-5, 7, 8, 17, 21, 25 and 26 are patentable over Hamaguchi for at least the reasons set forth above. Nothing in this reference suggests the benefit of using conical pole pieces as in the present invention. Hence, the rejection of these claims under 35 USC 103 is now moot.

Claim 22 is patentable over Hamaguchi even when considered in combination with Honjo, US 5,557,105. As indicated above, Hamaguchi neither teaches nor suggests the use of conical pole pieces. Honjo, describes the use of electromagnetic lenses 22 and 24 and a deflector 23, but none of these elements employs conical magnetic pole pieces as presently claimed. Hence, even if the teachings of Honjo were used in a system as described by Hamaguchi, one would still not arrive at the present invention. Claim 22 is therefore patentable over this combination of references.

Claims 23 and 24 are patentable over Honjo inasmuch as honjo fails to teach or suggest the use of conical pole pieces as presently claimed.

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Respectfully submitted,

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